

HISTORIOGRAPHY OF JAPANESE “ISLAMIC POLICY” IN INDONESIA

Saiful Umam

*Faculty of Adab and Humanities, State Islamic University
Syarif Hidayatullah, Jakarta*

INTRODUCTION

Japanese occupation in Southeast Asia, specifically in Indonesia, was very short compared to the Western colonialism in the region. It was only about three and half years, 1942-1945. However, many scholars have studied the period and a number of books and articles have been produced. Almost all of them note the importance of the short period in changing socio-political condition of the occupied areas. Some argue that, despite its short time, Japanese occupation was a watershed for the history of Southeast Asian countries.¹

The propaganda of Japan when she landed to the region was to build “the Greater East Asia,” and “Co-Prosperity Sphere.” To realize that, Japan tried to win support from as many population as possible in the occupied territory, so that she cooperated with those who really had influence on the grass-root level with the objective that mobilization would be successful. Japan was in need of natural and human resources for war purposes. In Indonesia, more precisely in Java, Japan used *ulama* or *kiyai* (religious leaders/scholars) as her main agents of the propaganda. This is why the term “Islamic policy” is usually used by scholars who study the Japanese occupation in the region.

Harry J. Benda² and C.A.O van Nieuwenhuijze³ are two scholars who specifically discuss the Islamic policy, though the earlier deals the topic in a book while the latter in a chapter. Abdul Aziz⁴ dedicates also a chapter of his book on the Islamic policy while Kobayashi Yasuko writes an article on the similar issue.⁵ Aiko Kurasawa, who studies various aspects of mobilization and control in Java by the Japanese military administration, contributes a very significant insight on the Islamic

¹ Alfred McCoy, ed. *Southeast Asia under Japanese Occupation* (New Heaven: Yale University Press, 1980).

² Harry J. Benda, *The Crescent and the Rising Sun: Indonesian Islam under the Japanese Occupation 1942-1945* (The Hague: W. van Hoeve Ltd., 1958). Another article, which discusses the early period of Japanese occupation by Benda is "The Beginning of the Japanese Occupation," *The Far Eastern Quarterly* 15 (1956).

³ C.A.O van Nieuwenhuijze, *Aspects of Islam in Post-Colonial Indonesia* (The Hague: W. van Hoeve, 1958), 109-60. The chapter entitles “Japanese Islam Policy in Java 1942-1945.”

⁴ A Aziz, *Japan's Colonialism and Indonesia* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1955).

⁵ Yasuko Kobayashi, "Kyai and Japanese Military," *Studia Islamika* 4, no. 3 (1997).

policy by discussing training for *kiyai*.⁶ In addition to those who deal with the Islamic policy, there are scholars who analyze general issues of the Japanese occupation in Indonesia, such as Willard H. Elsabee,⁷ George Kanahale,⁸ and Shigeru Sato.⁹ Three articles on aspects of the Japanese occupation in Indonesia have been written by three different scholars, Anthony Reid,¹⁰ Elly Touwen-Bouwisma,¹¹ and A.B. Lopian.¹²

This article will discuss how the Japanese "Islamic policy" has been discussed by scholars. To what extent do they differ in interpreting its significance in elevating political roles of Muslim elites and its difference from similar policy of the Dutch colonial power? How do they view the effect of the policy to the nationalist movement, precisely the independence, of Indonesia? To begin with, I will explain the term Islamic policy by discussing three related Japanese policies of the establishment of Shumubu-Shumuka, Masyumi, and the training for ulama.

1. The Islamic Policy

This term does not mean a policy which is Islamic but it refers to a Japanese policy in winning Muslims' support in Java. Muslims are majority population in the island and Japan knew that those who had strong influence on the grass-root level were not political figures but religious leaders. Therefore, the Japanese government tried to keep the loyalty of Muslim figures by providing more concession to them than that to other groups, such as nationalists and *priyayi* (autochthonous aristocrats). Three aspects of the Islamic policy, which have been discussed by scholars are *Shumubu-Shumuka* (Office of Religious Affairs, central and residential levels), Masyumi (*Majelis Syuro Muslimin Indonesia* or Consultative Council of Indonesian Muslims), and training for *ulama*.¹³

Benda points out that before coming to the Islamic policy, Japan experienced a "trial and error" period. He uses this term to show a period between March 1942 and the end of the year, when the Japanese military government took inconsistent actions. While Japan was committed to winning support from Muslims, she took

⁶ Aiko Kurasawa, "Mobilization and Control: A Study of Social Change in Rural Java, 1942-1945" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Cornell University, 1988).

⁷ Willard Elsabee, *Japan's Role in Southeast Asian Nationalist Movements 1940-1945* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1953).

⁸ George Kanahale, "Japanese Occupation of Indonesia" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Cornell University, 1967).

⁹ Shigeru Sato, *War, Nationalism, and Peasants: Java under the Japanese Occupation, 1942-1945* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1994).

¹⁰ Anthony Reid, "Indonesia: From Briefcase to Samurai Sword," in *Southeast Asia under Japanese Occupation*, ed. Alfred McCoy (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980).

¹¹ Elly Touwen-Bouwisma, "The Indonesian Nationalists and the Japanese 'Liberation' of Indonesia: Visions and Reactions," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 27, no. 1 (1996).

¹² A.B. Lopian, "Personal Reflection on the Japanese Occupation in Indonesia," *Southeast Asian Studies* 34, no. 1 (1996).

¹³ These three topics are discussed by Benda, Nieuwenhuijze, and Kurasawa though the portion of each issue discussed is different from one author to the other.

several actions, which disappointed them. For examples, it banned all foreign languages including Arabic from being taught in schools, it detained K.H. Hasyim Asy'ari, a very prominent *ulama* and the supreme leader of the Nahdatul Ulama (NU)—the largest traditionalist Muslim organization—and it required all people to do *saikere*, bowing in the direction of the imperial palace, which resembles the act of *rukū'* (bowing, with two alms touching the knees) in Islamic prayer (*ṣalāt*).¹⁴ During the period, the military government also cooperated with Muslim political leaders, such as Abikusno and Wondoamiseno. After the government realized that these actions were contradictory to the grand strategy of winning support from majority of Javanese, it lifted them.

It is only Benda who categorizes this period as the trial and error. Yasuko, though mentions about the ridiculous actions, does not use the term. She only argues that this is because "the Japanese army did not have any concrete plans to carry out although the importance of an Islamic policy was fully recognized."¹⁵ Aziz states that "Japan began by committing many serious mistakes,"¹⁶ without elucidating further what he means with serious mistakes. Nieuwenhuijze, on the contrary, does not mention these inconsistencies. His article implies that Japan had already had a decisive plan from the early period. "Within the first six months of their arrival, the Japanese were getting Java ready for an active policy that was to make its population prepared to contribute their share to the Japanese war effort. Propaganda, both religious and otherwise, was duly prepared."¹⁷ Now, let's see more detail each part of the Islamic policy and discuss how the scholars view them.

1.1 Shumubu-Shumuka

Shumubu or the Central Office of Religious Affairs is apparently the most important institution in implementing the Islamic policy. It was a part of the Japanese military government and existed not long after Japan landed in Java, March 1942. Headed for the first time by Colonel Horie, *Shumubu* propagated actively the presence of Japan and the goal of creating "Greater East Asia." Colonel Horie visited mosques, met Muslim leaders, and received visits from them. During the early months, Horie relied on Muslim political leaders, such as Abikusno, in making contact with the Muslim figures. The most important meeting was when Horie, facilitated by Abikusno, met *ulama* in several cities in Central and East Java, in May 1942. The tour was very significant because Japan realized that Muslim leaders who had real influence over the mass were *ulama* and not political figures. With this journey, Japan had a direct access to *ulama* at grass-root level. According to Benda, this tour was a turning point after which the role of political leaders decreased.¹⁸ In December 1942, without

¹⁴ Benda, *The Crescent*, 124-27 and 233 (note 22).

¹⁵ Kobayashi, "Kyai and Japanese," 76.

¹⁶ Aziz, *Japan's Colonialism*, 194.

¹⁷ Nieuwenhuijze, *Aspects of Islam*, 122.

¹⁸ Benda, *The Crescent*, 113.

involving them, *Shumubu* arranged a meeting between 32 Muslim leaders from Java and *Gunseikan* (the head of the military administration), Let. Gen. Okazaki. The significant role of *ulama* was also confirmed by the chief commander during the meeting.¹⁹

Shumubu was a symbol of how the military government gave concession to Islamic leaders, when this department became the first and the only office of the *Gunseikanbu* which was headed by a native Indonesian.²⁰ In September 1943 this office was headed by Prof. Dr. Hoesein Djajadiningrat, and in August 1944 he was replaced by K.H. Hasyim Asy'ari. At the same, the military government also appointed Abdul Kahar Muzakkir, a leader of Muhammadiyah, as the Vice-Chairman, and A. Wahid Hasyim, the son of Hasyim Asy'ari, as the Advisor of Shumubu. In addition, among four sections of this office, two of them were also headed by the Muslim figures.²¹

Some scholars, however, argue that the appointment of *ulama* in such high rank position of *Shumubu* was purely political in order to maximize mobilization of Muslim people for supporting Japanese war purposes. Nieuwenhuijze, for example, contends that the Indonesians in *Shumubu* "would automatically serve as buffers,"²² for they had to intensify contact with the public. Aziz, on the other hand, perceives the appointment of Hasyim Asy'ari as symbolic because he kept living in Jombang, East Java, and almost never came to the office. "His [Asy'ari] investiture was purely a symbolic one. The Japanese merely wanted to connect the name of this old influential person with the military government," says Aziz.²³ Benda also has similar opinion to that of Aziz's, though he insists that the symbol remained important because Asy'ari's son, Wahid Hasyim, together with Abdul Kahar Muzakkir, "assumed top ranking positions in the reorganized *Shumubu*."²⁴ Similar to Benda, Kurasawa argues that the government regarded Asy'ari "as indispensable and considered it advisable to take advantage of the great influence and prestige of this old *kiyai*."²⁵ His appointment, according to Kurasawa, was nevertheless "enthusiastically welcomed by the Muslim population."²⁶ Kurasawa further explains that the appointment was the Japan's concession to Muslims and "should not be regarded as an inevitable outcome of Japanese favoritism to Muslims."²⁷

¹⁹ Ibid., 119; Nieuwenhuijze, *Aspects of Islam*, 142-43; Kobayashi, "Kyai and Japanese," 83.

²⁰ Kurasawa, "Mobilization and Control," 390.

²¹ The section dealing with Islam and the management was held by K.H. Adnan, and the section responsible for propagandas, trainings, and periodical publication was entrusted to K.H. Imam Zarkasyi, the founders of the Modern *Pesantren* Gontor, Ponorogo. Ibid., 398-99.

²² Nieuwenhuijze, *Aspects of Islam*, 158.

²³ Aziz, *Japan's Colonialism*, 207.

²⁴ Benda, *The Crescent*, 166.

²⁵ Kurasawa, "Mobilization and Control," 396.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

The Japanese military government added more concessions to *ulama* when it decided to establish branch offices of *Shumubu* in all residencies in Java. The office, called *Shumuka*, was headed by local prominent *ulama*. With this office, *ulama* overshadowed *penghulu* (Muslim government officials) who were in charge of Islamic affairs during the Dutch colonialism. *Penghulu* were even under the control of *ulama*. Almost all scholars agree that, at least until mid 1944, through *Shumubu* and *Shumuka*, *ulama* enjoyed privileges from Japan at the expense of nationalist and *priyayi* groups.²⁸

Despite the important role of *Shumubu* in the Japanese political Islam, a Dutch scholar, Nieuwenhuijze argues that this institution was "the successor of the pre-war *Kantor voor Inlandse Zaken* (Office of Indigenous Affairs)."²⁹ The difference between the two institutions, in his view, was that while the *Kantoor* "worked along scholarly lines," as it was headed by an "arabists and islmologist,"³⁰ *Shumubu* was "meant for action, directed towards the general public."³¹ In other words, the *Kantoor* devoted to study "the Indonesian sphere of line and the Indonesian Muslim community,"³² while *Shumubu* "could not afford to stay behind the scene, neither could it restrict its work to observation."³³ On the contrary, a Japanese scholar, Kurasawa, though acknowledges similarities between the two institutes, emphasizes argument that *Shumubu* represented high attention of the Japanese government toward religious affairs. Even in Japan, such institution did not exist; religious affairs were handled by the Department of Education. "It is all the more significant that the administration of religious affairs was given such unprecedented attention, and this shows how sincerely the Japanese authorities were trying to deal with Islamic affairs in Java," says Kurasawa.³⁴ It seems that Kurasawa stresses the importance of the office under the Japanese authorities and its difference from that under the Dutch colonial government.

1.2 Masyumi

Shumubu played significant role in establishing *Masyumi*. In November 1943, on behalf of the military government, *Shumubu* dissolved *Majelis Islam A'la Indonesia* (MIAI, the Highest Council of Indonesian Islam) and established *Majelis Syuro Muslimin Indonesia* (Masyumi, the Consultative Council of Indonesian Muslims). The MIAI was established by a coalition of Muslim organizations in 1937 and functioned as uniting all potential powers in opposing the Dutch colonialism. The non-cooperative with the colonial authority was, therefore, one of the most

²⁸ Benda, *The Crescent*, 168; Kurasawa, "Mobilization and Control," 383-84; Nieuwenhuijze, *Aspects of Islam*, 143.

²⁹ *Aspects of Islam*, 116.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid., 117.

³² Ibid., 116.

³³ Ibid., 117.

³⁴ Kurasawa, "Mobilization and Control," 384-85.

significant characters of this group. Japan tried to dissolve this organization by creating *Persiapan Persatuan Umat Islam* (PPUI, the Preparation for Union of Muslims) which was headed by Abikusno Tjokrosujoso. However, during the meeting attended by Islamic leaders and figures on September 4, 1942, Muslim leaders defended the existence of MIAI and elected Wondoamiseno as the new leader. The military government had no choice but to accept this decision after it required four Japanese sit in the advisory board. Later on, the government found that anti-colonial sentiment was still persistent in the organization. This view is based on initiative of the MIAI in establishing *Baitul Mal* (Ar. *Bayt al-māl*, Islamic treasury) in several cities without seeking approval from the government. Therefore, the dissolution of MIAI by the Japanese authorities, according to most scholars, was due to wariness of the government on the non-cooperative character which in the future might turn into anti-Japanese one.³⁵ Another reason of dissolution of MIAI, according to Nieuwenhuijze and Aziz, was the fact that NU and Muhammadiyah (the modernist Muslim association) stayed outside the organization, while Japan saw both as the most influential groups at grass-root level.³⁶

Since the establishment of Masyumi was facilitated by the government, Benda suggests that it “enjoyed from its very inception far greater official prestige,”³⁷ than MIAI. While MIAI only had one office in Jakarta, Masyumi’s branches spread out all over the island. Japan was not worried anymore of this group being anti-Japanese since its main objectives were “aiding Dai Nippon in the interests of Greater East Asia,” in addition to strengthening unity of all Muslim organizations.³⁸ However, in the view of Benda, this institution was no longer a social organization, but became “part of the government itself.”³⁹ In Aziz’s term, Masyumi was “a semi government organization.”⁴⁰

1.3 Training for Ulama

Almost all scholars agree that training (*latihan*) for ulama was the most important program conducted by the military authorities during occupation. The importance took place in its regularity, number of participants, and its long term implementation. The training was conducted monthly, from July 1943 until June 1945, except during the Islamic fasting month (*Ramadhan*), totaling 17 times. During first few months it ran for four weeks but since February 1944 it reduced into three week. Each month the training was attended by about sixty *ulama* from all residencies in Java. The total

³⁵ Benda, *The Crescent*, 144-49; Nieuwenhuijze, *Aspects of Islam*, 144-53; Aziz, *Japan’s Colonialism*, 205.

³⁶ Nieuwenhuijze, *Aspects of Islam*, 154-55; Aziz, *Japan’s Colonialism*, 205.

³⁷ Benda, *The Crescent*, 152.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 150.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 166.

⁴⁰ Aziz, *Japan’s Colonialism*, 207.

number of participants was, therefore, about 1,020 *ulama*. This figure, according to Kurasawa, was equal to 5.5% of all registered *ulama* in Java at the time.⁴¹

The objectives of the training, as stated by *Shumubucho* (the head office of *Shumubu*), Col. Horie when he addressed the participants at the opening ceremony of the first training, were "to strengthen [your] understanding of the world situation, and to increase your spirit so that you will be able to give the fullest possible support to the government."⁴² For Japanese, the second purpose was certainly more important. Therefore, for Aziz, the training was "mainly designed to indoctrinate Japanese ideology."⁴³ This is so because, as Aziz says, "every course ended with a final recapitulation and pledge of loyalty to Japan."⁴⁴ Benda argues that this training was "ultimately and lastingly to politicize Indonesian Islam at the village level far beyond its pre-occupation level."⁴⁵

Now let us examine the analysis of scholars in regards to the Japanese Islamic policy in general. According to Benda, privileging Muslims at the expense of *priyayi* and, to some extent, nationalist groups, was part of "divide-and-rule" policy.⁴⁶ This term reminds us to the well known policy of the Dutch colonialism, *divide et impera*. In fact, Benda acknowledges his indebtedness to a Dutch scholar, Nieuwenhuijze, who have suggested him to use this analysis,⁴⁷ though the latter himself does not use this analysis in his article. Benda argues that by the Islamic policy, Japan created new elite groups of Muslims in order to check nationalist figures.⁴⁸ Although Muslim leaders had "a greater measure of inherent strength than the other groups," according to Benda, "they owed much of their newly-won position to the occupying power."⁴⁹ By the policy, Japan continued and deepened the division between the Islamic and the nationalist elites, a policy which had been hitherto well implemented by the Dutch authorities.⁵⁰

Benda's analysis is criticized by a Japanese scholar, Kurasawa. Although both of them studied at Cornell and both initially wrote this topic for Ph.D. dissertation, Kurasawa's conclusion is in opposition to that of Benda. Kurasawa contends that Japan tried to unite Indonesians in order to proceed with the war. In addition, *priyayi*'s role in the administration, according to Kurasawa, was not replaced by Islamic groups. Kurasawa provides interesting facts to support her ideas. In *Shumuka*, for example, she found that not all of this institution was headed by *ulama*. Some of them were chaired by former *penghulu* or even those who had

⁴¹ Kurasawa, "Mobilization and Control," 415-16.

⁴² Benda, *The Crescent*, 135.

⁴³ Aziz, *Japan's Colonialism*, 202.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Benda, *The Crescent*, 135.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 156, 70, 73-74, 76.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 275 (note 2).

⁴⁸ Ibid., 156.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 173.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 176.

priyayi background.⁵¹ In practice, *Shumuka* did not necessarily have control over the *penghulu* as defined formally by *Shumubu*. Based on the field interview, Kurasawa concludes that "the management of daily Islamic affairs was still left in the hands of the *penghulu*'s office without any limitation of their power."⁵² For the training of *ulama*, Kurasawa shows that the participants were not solely *ulama* in common understandings, i.e. old people, having no formal education background, working independently so receiving no monthly salary, and not *priyayi*. She finds that many of the participants enjoyed formal education of elementary schools; about 63% were under 40 years old; about 23% had permanent job—either in governmental or private institutions—and received monthly remuneration. Some of them were also *penghulu*.⁵³ By these data, Kurasawa implies that Japan did not strictly limit the target of the policy to the so-called *kiyai*. Therefore, Benda's contention that Japan implemented *divide et impera* policy, according to Kurasawa, has no solid bases.

Similar to Kurasawa, Shigeru Sato, a Japanese scholar who studies the impact of the occupation on the economic and physical welfare of the peasantry of Java, also rejected Benda's analysis of the "divide and rule" strategy. On the contrary, Sato argues that to "unite and mobilize" was the predominant theme of the Japanese policy throughout the occupation.⁵⁴ He also argues that compared to the Islamic leaders and nationalists, *priyayi* "played the most important and indispensable roles in the military administration."⁵⁵ Furthermore, he insists that the role of Islamic leaders "in the formulation and implementation of the occupation policies was particularistic and marginal."⁵⁶

Another Japanese scholar, Kobayashi Yasuko, offers a different way to make the Japanese Islamic policy sound less negative. She shows that concessions given to Muslim groups were basically suggested by Muslims themselves. Yasuko provides a historical document which enlisted 98 requests proposed by Muslims to the military government during 1942 and until March 1943.⁵⁷ Yasuko also argues that the policy mutually benefited both Japanese and Indonesian Muslims. "Islamic leaders tried to take advantage of the opportunities," for their own agenda and purposes.⁵⁸ Many of them assumed considerable political power during and after the occupation because of the Islamic policy. "The seeds of the changing role of *kyais* were firstly planted in the Japanese occupation policy."⁵⁹ She gives an example of Wahid Hasyim, father of

⁵¹ Kurasawa, "Mobilization and Control," 406-08.

⁵² Ibid., 404.

⁵³ Ibid., 432-45.

⁵⁴ Sato, *War, Nationalism, and Peasants*, 231.

⁵⁵ Ibid., ix.

⁵⁶ Ibid., x.

⁵⁷ Kobayashi, "Kyai and Japanese," 85.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 92.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 93.

the fourth president of Indonesia, Abdurrahman Wahid.⁶⁰ In short, Yasuko says, Muslim leaders "took independent action beyond Japanese expectations."⁶¹

The historiography of the Japanese Islamic policy shows that there are, at least, two different and, to some extent, opposing interpretations proposed by scholars who have studied the policy. Non-Japanese experts tend to be very critical to the policy while Japanese scholars, despite their critical, tried to explain why the Japanese authorities took certain actions and what impacts, especially the positive ones, of the policy were. This difference is apparently influenced by the availability and absence of the scholars' attachment to Japan. In addition, the time lag might also contribute to the differences. Benda, Nieuwenhuijze, and Aziz did their research in the 1950s⁶² while Kurasawa, Sato, and Yasuko conducted the research in the 1980s and 1990s.⁶³ It is obvious that the latter scholars found historical documents which were inaccessible in the earlier periods.

2. Studies on Impacts of the Japanese Occupation

Now let us discuss scholars' perception on the impacts of the Japanese occupation in Indonesia. Elsbree who examines the development of nationalism in Indonesia concludes that nationalism was stronger and more developed than the Japanese imagined. Nationalists also demanded greater concession than the Japanese anticipated.⁶⁴ However he argues that Japanese policy was not the only cause for the development of nationalism. "In part, it was the result of the general situation,"⁶⁵

Similar to Elsbree, Kanahele also studies nationalist movement during the Japanese occupation. Kanahele argues that the Japanese interregnum of three and half years "determined the direction and tempo of the nationalist movement toward the post-war revolution."⁶⁶ According to Kanahele, nationalists were the primary beneficiaries of more concessions granted by the Japanese authorities in the final year of occupation, so that the nationalists were able to strengthen their positions and increase their demands.⁶⁷ "The Japanese occupation had so brought the nationalist forces to threshold of power that when the war abruptly ended on August 15, they emerged as the vanguard ready to assume control in the vacuum created by the surrender. In three and a half years the nationalists ascended from an outlawed movement to the threshold of nation-hood."⁶⁸

⁶⁰ Ibid., 89-92.

⁶¹ Ibid., 92.

⁶² Benda's and Nieuwenhuijze's books were published in 1958, while Aziz's in 1955.

⁶³ Kurasawa finished her thesis in 1988, Sato's book was published in 1994 and Yasuko's article appeared in 1997.

⁶⁴ Elsbree, *Japan's Role*, 165.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 166.

⁶⁶ Kanahele, "Japanese Occupation of Indonesia," iii.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 238-41.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 242-43.

Touwen-Bouwsma examines a slight different topic of nationalism. She focuses on the nationalist movement in early few months of the Japanese occupation. She contends that during the period, nationalists felt badly betrayed by the Japanese because their aspiration of independence was completely crushed by Japan.⁶⁹ "The nationalists were expelled from the rural areas in Java and the Japanese kept a close eye on them to make sure that they did not have a chance to maintain contact with the common people"⁷⁰ In comparing between the Dutch colonialism and the Japanese occupation, Reid, similar to Kanahele, concludes that "The Japanese occupation had a major impact on the subsequent shape of Indonesia."⁷¹ According to Reid, the Japanese military administration "armed Indonesians to resist successfully the re-imposition of the prewar regime, it witnessed the consolidation of Indonesian unity and identity, and it encouraged the emergence on the one hand of a new military elite, and on the other of a political leadership which was stronger on charisma and rhetoric than on political organization and cadre formation."⁷²

An Indonesian historian, A.B. Lopian provides different conclusion when he discusses the proclamation of Indonesian independence. According to him, it was "an entirely Indonesian affair. The Japanese occupation government—apart from some individual sympathizers—was an aloof outsider."⁷³ He supports his opinion by arguing that there was no official intention of the Japanese government to grant the Indonesians political freedom. However, he appreciates the Japanese occupation for several reasons. "It put an end to Dutch rule in the first place. It provided an opportunity for the people to foster feelings of solidarity in times of hardship, nourish their national identity, and gather self confidence to determine their own future."⁷⁴

CONCLUSION

The three and half years of the Japanese occupation in Indonesia is certainly a significant period of the Indonesian history. Many scholars share a viewpoint that radical changes took place during that time, affecting on either nationalist or Islamic groups. However, they differ in explaining the details as well as how and to what extent the changes had impacted on political affairs of Indonesia. Some scholars, such as Benda and Aziz, view the Islamic policy as similar to that of *devide at empera* of the Dutch colonial authorities. Others, such as Kurasawa and Sato see it as a policy of uniting potentials of indigenous people. The availability and accessibility of historical sources as well as topics of interest seem to be important factors for the diverse opinion of the scholars. However personal subjectivity of the scholars is also another reason that affects the dissimilarities. This is obvious, especially, for the

⁶⁹ Touwen-Bouwsma, "The Indonesian Nationalists," 18.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Reid, "Indonesia: From Briefcase," 28.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Lopian, "Personal Reflection," 222.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

cases of the Japanese and Indonesian scholars who provide more glorious attempts on the history of their respective nations.

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